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Antonio Gramsci: Persons, Subjectivity and the Political

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Antonio Gramsci has been widely acknowledged to be one of the most significant political theorists of the 20th century.¹ His concepts influence a wide and growing range of intellectual fields extending from linguistics, geography and anthropology, to cultural theory, subaltern studies, International Relations theory and beyond. Yet, as Michel Foucault once observed, Gramsci is an author who is ‘more often cited than actually known.’² This situation, at one time unavoidable, is now contingent thanks to the ongoing publication of various critical editions of his writings and the growing philological work of successive generations of international Gramsci scholars, particularly those in Italy.³ While Gramscian concepts continue to find purchase across this kaleidoscope of intellectual disciplines, the historical-theoretical laboratory of the Sardinian’s *Prison Notebooks* remains an underexplored resource through which to articulate the complex interrelationship between subjectivity and the political.⁴ The prevalent image of Gramsci in the anglophone world as a theorist of hegemony often reduces this term to a rather limited and partial sense.⁵ These readings frequently note Gramsci’s substantial contribution to our understanding of the macro-processes of state formation and its apparatuses, but they often overlook his equally insightful framework for analyzing the micro-processes of the transformation of society. I will suggest that a comprehension of these ‘molecular’ micro-processes is vital for a full appreciation of the rich contribution made by Gramsci to our understanding of the relationship between subjectivity and the political. In particular, a central focal point of Gramsci’s *Notebooks*, the nexus between philosophy and politics, retains a power to provoke stimulating encounters with more contemporary thinkers. This chapter will elaborate the relationship between subjectivity and the political by examining a constellation of concepts (individuality, personality,

conformism) deployed by Gramsci to articulate his conception of subjectivity in his prison writings.

A major difficulty of realizing Gramsci's contribution in this regard is that he tends to withdraw from explicitly formulating his theory using the language of 'subjects' as such. Thus, Peter Thomas contends that Gramsci's *Notebooks* involve 'a rejection of philosophies of the subject' in favor of an alternative tradition based on the concept of the 'person.'⁶ Beginning with a characterization of his predominantly pre-intentional notion of 'subjectivity' and its inseparability from 'objectivity' in his thought, I examine Gramsci's conceptual shift from the language of subjects to that of persons and a theory of personality. Locating the foundation of this move in his 'politico-gnoseological' theory of the 'effective reality of human relations of knowledge,'⁷ I will then briefly outline the relationship between this theme and his wider conceptual framework (hegemony, ideology, common sense, etc.). On this basis, I will draw on recent scholarship⁸ to focus in more detail on the relationship between the individual and society in Gramsci's *Notebooks*, exploring the distinctive conception of personality that emerges from his theory. This will allow me to study, on the one hand, the category of 'molecular' transformations in Gramsci's writings, and, on the other, the nature of the agency that realizes social change: the formation of collective will. In so doing, I will pay specific attention to Gramsci's analysis of collective organisms, and of the individual and collective category of 'person' to negotiate the 'strangely composite,' fractured and fragmentary character of the lived experience of subaltern groups under conditions of modernity.⁹ Finally, I will argue that Gramsci's proposal for a 'new philosophy,' alongside a new culture that is 'rooted in the popular consciousness,'¹⁰ continues to be relevant as a source for understanding the relationship between subjectivity and the political in our own time.

Gramsci and Subjectivity

Given the privileged position of the political in Gramsci's conception of the will, it is perhaps unsurprising that subjectivity takes on a collective form in the first instance.¹¹ His *Prison Notebooks* are, among other things, a sustained reflection on the mass popular experiences of his time, whether in the form of the rationalized techniques of Fordism in the United States, the social experiments of the Soviets in Russia, or the rise of Fascism in his native Italy.¹² In this context, we can note two distinctive features of his conception of subjectivity: its predominantly 'pre-intentional' character, and his extreme reluctance to countenance the speculative separation of 'subjectivity' from 'objectivity.'

In his entry for '*soggettivo, soggettivismo, soggettività*' [subjective, subjectivism, subjectivity] in the *Dizionario gramsciano*, Giuseppe Cacciatore examines the variety of fields in which Gramsci deploys the language of 'subjectivity' and 'objectivity.' He identifies a range of philosophical, political, historical and literary uses of these terms.¹³ Cacciatore demonstrates that Gramsci articulates the subjective dimension of his thought in different senses in an extremely wide-ranging semantic field.¹⁴ However, Gramsci's primary concern is to avoid succumbing to a speculative conception of subjectivity, rather seeking to realize a 'more objectified and concretely universalized subjectivity.'¹⁵ In the *Notebooks*, the subjective and the objective are always already intertwined. One can never disentangle in reality the objective and subjective conditions of history. For Gramsci, this binary distinction is 'simply one of a didactic character.'¹⁶ On the contrary, in the creation of a collective will, the important factor is to analyze the 'size and concentration of subjective forces,'¹⁷ and therefore the 'dialectical relation between conflicting subjective forces.'¹⁸ We find Gramsci's conception of subjectivity at all times suffused within a wider analysis of the conflict between social forces. In Gramsci's political thought an account of this struggle is necessary to

illuminate the connection between the process of the constitution of individual and collective subjectivities.

Guido Liguori suggests that it is the ‘constant cross-referencing of the subjective and objective that makes for a great part of the fascination (and the difficulty) of his work.’¹⁹ For Gramsci, subjects (principally class actors) do not emerge in a pure form or *ex nihilo*, but in a complex and dynamic terrain, a conflicting field of social forces. While Gramsci at times accents different moments of ‘*subjects, processes and forms*,’²⁰ in order to account for this complex of fields, his reflections are informed consistently by the fundamental configuration of a struggle between dominant and subordinate groups. Liguori also identifies a second aspect of Gramsci’s conception of subjectivity; namely, its predominantly pre-intentional character, ‘where the greater part of subjects are not *mobilized*, but *defined* (in their subjectivity, in their individual and collective way of being) by ideology.’²¹ Gramsci sought to theorize the lack of historical awareness, and thereby lack of autonomy, of the majority of the population. At the same time, his realist treatment of this lack of autonomy does not hypostatize it as an absolute, taking seriously the historical effectivity of ideologies embodied as popular beliefs and their potential for transformation.²² Gramsci’s reading of the Marxian concept of ideology and, more broadly speaking, his innovative interpretation of the doctrine of historical materialism is a terrain for the constitution of these subjectivities, and for the development of an original theory of persons and personality.

Gramsci has at times been regarded as a ‘subjectivist’ thinker, whose criticisms of the ‘mechanicism’ and ‘economism’ of the dominant trends of Marxism within the Second International has been associated with its opposite: a valorization of voluntarist agency. Thus, the influential objections to Gramsci’s ‘absolute historicism’ advanced by the French Marxist Louis Althusser assert that, despite its merits, the Sardinian’s thought falls within a trend of ‘theoretical’ or ‘revolutionary humanism’ (shared by thinkers such as Georg Lukács and

Jean-Paul Sartre) that threatens to undermine the scientific qualities of Marxism.²³ Taking this criticism as a starting point, Thomas returns to Gramsci's texts to argue that Althusser's claims are misdirected. According to Thomas, Gramsci cuts an unorthodox figure in contemporary discussions regarding subjectivity, since his articulation of the political withdraws from the conventional deployment of the category of the subject. Thus, following Valentino Gerratana,²⁴ Thomas argues that

Gramsci's analyses operate with the much older and more ambivalent category of the "person [*la persona*]," or more precisely, a particular reformulation of this category that is not easily assimilated to the modern (epistemologically founded) discourses of the knowing subject that have often subsumed the older category.²⁵

Thomas traces the category of 'person' back to the Stoic tradition, which transposes the notion of a dramatic mask onto the domain of the 'ethico-political' as a means of accounting for 'the various roles "played" by any one individual in the course of social life.'²⁶ He then gives a typology of the bifurcation of this category into polarized currents. An exemplar of the first current is the Kantian conception of 'the person as an "end" in itself,'²⁷ rooted in 'an internalization of reason as definitive of the human essence.'²⁸ The second is understood through the Hobbesian distinction between 'natural' and 'artificial' persons, where 'any individual "represents", in the form of a "person", numerous social roles.'²⁹ The tension between these traditions is that between a focus on interiority (consciousness) and exteriority (social relations/identity). In what follows, we will trace some of the distinct resonances between the latter tradition of exteriority and the Gramscian conception of the 'person' on the terrain of the modern State. However, this is not to suggest that Gramsci is silent on the questions of consciousness and interiority. While Gramsci's approach to persons rejects the formulation of an original unitary human essence, which he sees as the residue of a 'theological' conception,³⁰ this does not logically entail the rejection of all processes of

externalization. Nevertheless, Gramsci favors viewing the ‘human’ as a point of arrival rather than a point of departure.³¹ He provides, as Thomas notes, ‘an ethico-political explanation of the unity posited by the theologically inflected concept’ of the person.³²

For Thomas, this conception provides an ‘anti-subjectivist’ vision of the ‘constitutive social and political over-determination of *la persona* [the person].’³³ Gramsci develops this distinctive approach to the problems of philosophy by engaging in recurring dialogue with key texts by Marx, such as the *Theses on Feuerbach*,³⁴ and the 1859 *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.³⁵ Gramsci regards his own positions as an elaboration and unpacking of philosophical insights locked in the *Theses on Feuerbach* in aphoristic form. In particular, we can examine the foundations of his conception of subjectivity in relation to Marx’s contention that the individual is the ‘ensemble of the social relations.’³⁶ Gramsci takes up this conception, as Thomas explains, exploring the ‘non-identity of the individual’³⁷ as a condensation or synthesis of these relations, ‘as a “composite body” in which the dynamics of the social formation are found to be at work in a “molecular” fashion.’³⁸ We can explain Gramsci’s conception of philosophy more generally in relation to Marx’s eleventh thesis: ‘The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it.’³⁹ As Christine Buci-Glucksmann has argued, this polemical assertion of the unitary link between theory and practice is both an immediately political statement and the signal for a reconfiguration of our understanding of philosophy.⁴⁰ It is therefore an important foundation for Gramsci’s conception of subjectivity and his attempt to remove what he sees as the encrustations of both mechanicism and voluntarism from Marxist thought. In this sense, Gramsci follows a path explored initially by the Italian philosopher Antonio Labriola. Drawing on the inspiration of Labriola’s reading of Marxism as a ‘philosophy of praxis,’⁴¹ Gramsci attempts to develop a new way of conducting philosophy.

This ‘new philosophy’ has significant implications for Gramsci’s theory of knowledge,⁴² in which the foundations of Gramsci’s move from the subject to the person can be located.

In contrast to epistemological theories that are concerned with the problem of the creation of knowledge, Gramsci operates with what has been called a ‘gnoseology of politics,’⁴³ or a ‘politico-gnoseological’⁴⁴ conception of knowledge.⁴⁵ On the one hand, this is a conception of human knowledge as a practice, rather than a treatment of knowledge as a type of speculative and passive reflection. On the other hand, Gramsci is outspoken in rejecting the ‘residues of mechanistic thinking’⁴⁶ that are inherent to conceptions that regard theory ‘as a “complement” of practice, almost as an accessory.’⁴⁷ He therefore combines an emphasis on practice with the rejection of the reduction of theory to practice. Gramsci addresses this apparently contradictory combination of positions by formulating the problem of the unity of theory and practice as a historical process, ‘as an aspect of the question of the intellectuals.’⁴⁸ For as long as intellectuals are treated as separate to the great mass of the population, the impression will persist of a separation between theory and practice that is, according to Gramsci, ‘a purely mechanical operation.’⁴⁹ Thomas argues that this politico-gnoseological conception deals with the ‘effective reality of human relations of knowledge.’⁵⁰ In an alternative formulation, Christine Buci-Glucksmann explains this conception as a dual process in which ‘philosophical positions have their effects in all practices,’⁵¹ and ‘all practices contain knowledge effects.’⁵² Buci-Glucksmann warns against reducing this conception of gnoseology to politics, or obscuring the connections between philosophy and politics. Rather, she argues that the ‘gnoseology of politics,’⁵³ affirms ‘a new mode of functioning between knowledge, politics, and *civiltà* [civilization].’⁵⁴ This conception is new in the sense that it neither privileges philosopher-intellectuals as custodians of knowledge, which they impart to the masses, nor does it reduce knowledge to an epiphenomenon of mechanically-determined economic forces. Rather, Gramsci seeks to reveal that his apparent

privileging of practice is an appearance produced only by the mechanical separation of theory and practice. For Gramsci, the novelty of his conception arises from conceiving the unity of these terms as a process of historical becoming, the creation of a ‘philosophical fact’ in the forging of the ‘theoretical-practical principle’ of a new hegemony.⁵⁵

This distinctive conception of knowledge has far-reaching consequences for Gramsci’s theoretical framework. The theory of personality that he develops from the conception of subjectivity associated with this perspective continues to resonate with contemporary thought. Thus, Thomas suggests that Gramsci’s turn to the ‘person’ represents ‘a valuable touchstone for the assessment of “returns of the subject” and discussions of various forms of “individuation” in philosophical debates today.’⁵⁶ Much of this more recent discussion emerges from the paradigms of structuralism and post-structuralism taking up a perspective that is critical of the type of theoretical humanism identified by Althusser above. While Gramsci advocates an understanding of the ‘philosophy of praxis’ as an ‘absolute humanism of history,’⁵⁷ he explains this as an ‘absolute secularization and earthliness of thought.’⁵⁸ In this view, the subject is not reliant on an essentialist framework, rather emerging from a conflicting terrain of competing hegemonies. This conception does not sit easily as an object of ‘anti-essentialist’ criticism, which is the perspective adopted by much of the more recent discussion of the political.⁵⁹ Indeed, a re-assessment of Gramsci’s conception of the relationship between subjectivity and the political might provide resources to help us to assess critically the formalist ‘discursive’ reading of hegemony at times employed in these debates.⁶⁰

Before discussing Gramsci’s conception of the relationship between individuality, sociality, and his theory of personality, I will outline briefly the relationship between the theme of subjectivity and his wider conceptual framework. The Gramscian conception of subjectivity is one that formulates the possibilities for action in a historically constituted field

of forces. Gramsci analyzes this field of forces as a struggle for hegemony, surveying the competing projects through which classes seek to elaborate various elements of political power, of both leadership and domination. The subject of a hegemonic project is a class, but, as Liguori points out, there is an intimate relationship in Gramsci's thought between hegemonic power and the State. For Gramsci, a class 'must "become the State" if it is to be a true hegemon.'⁶¹ Here, he understands the 'State' to be an expansive 'integral' form, incorporating the twin elements of force and consent. Gramsci's theory of hegemony is a thoroughgoing materialist analysis of both 'narrow' public state power, the formal institutions of government, including the police, the army and administrative bureaucracy, and its wider 'so-called private' forms in civil society, such as religious institutions, the press, trade unions, and wider civic organizations. Gramsci's conception of politics and the State rejects a mechanical determination of subjectivity by the economy, understood as the determination of historical evolution by iron laws of necessity.⁶² Rather, Gramsci proposes a realistic analysis of relations of force that implies an interaction of factors that restricts the possible choices of a subject within a given situation. Gramsci explores different levels in the relation of political forces during the emergence of a hegemonic project, the first of which he refers to as the 'economic-corporate.'⁶³ This represents a stage in which the 'degree of homogeneity, self-awareness and organization'⁶⁴ of a social group or class is limited to the primitive defense of its economic interests. The elaboration of higher levels of the relation of political forces involves the ability of groups to take ethico-political initiatives on the terrain of the State, meaning the assertion of a socio-political leadership that brings 'about not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity...not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane.'⁶⁵ For Gramsci, these levels correspond to 'various moments of collective political consciousness as they have manifested themselves in history up till now.'⁶⁶ Within this framework, the terrain on which collective subjects develop an awareness

of their own projects is that of ideology. However, the constitution of subjectivity is not simply the acquisition of a certain consciousness on a rationalist-Enlightenment model, but rather the elaboration of a ‘conception of the world,’⁶⁷ understood as a transformation of both ways of thinking and acting, and organized as a material force through its apparatuses. As Liguori explains, the ‘trenches and earthworks’⁶⁸ of these apparatuses are ‘re-elaborated, adapted and propagated’⁶⁹ in everyday forms of life, and they relate ‘to the importance of the *Notebooks*’ extended conception of intellectuals and their social role.’⁷⁰

Gramsci’s conception of ideology, as a ‘cement’ preserving the unity of a ‘social bloc,’⁷¹ runs counter to the dominant understanding of the role of ideology in Marxism as an explanation of distorted and misleading views of the world. The origins of the latter conception of ideology are usually located in Marx and Engels’s *German Ideology*: ‘If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.’⁷² Marx and Engels refer here to ideology as the inverted appearance of a historical life-process, in a form analogous to the inversion that takes place in the physical processes of the eye. This approach has provided the basis for a current within Marxism often referred to as a negative-critical approach to ideology. Later thinkers codified this negative theory of ideology with the notion of ‘false consciousness.’⁷³ While Gramsci’s notion of ideology is complex and multivalent in its usage, according to Liguori, it rejects the notion of ‘false consciousness’ and is essentially a ‘*positive* theory of ideology.’⁷⁴ Gramsci does occasionally refer to being ‘liberated from the prison of ideologies in the bad sense of the word.’⁷⁵ In the main however, Gramsci does not regard ideology as something illusory or false. Indeed he notes that the ‘bad sense of the word has become widespread, with the effect that the theoretical analysis of the concept of ideology has been modified and denatured.’⁷⁶ For Gramsci, ideology is rather the ‘site of constitution of

collective subjectivity,⁷⁷ the formation of composite social bodies around which ‘revolves the “war of position” and struggle for hegemony with which all society is permeated.’⁷⁸ This construction neither is the mechanical consequence of environmental factors, nor is it the product of the externalization of an idealistic core of autonomy. Rather, Gramsci seeks to trace the formation of a collective will from a concrete analysis of the historical processes of life, seeking to avoid succumbing to a speculative notion of the economy as a ‘hidden god’—a quasi-Marxist form of metaphysics—, but as ‘the ensemble of social relations in which real people move and act.’⁷⁹ According to Gramsci, this positive construction of a new hegemony, which seeks to develop into an ‘integral State’⁸⁰ and not simply a ‘government technically understood,’⁸¹ must involve the elaboration of a ‘conception of the world.’⁸² This is, on the one hand, a vision elaborated theoretically by intellectuals on behalf of a social group, but, on the other hand, an expression of the ‘solidity of popular beliefs’⁸³ of the mass of the group itself. Gramsci’s hostility to any form of speculation inclines him to reject any original notion of an essential ‘core’ of human autonomy. He asks us to consider whether the idea of the human being as a starting point is not in fact a ‘theological’ or ‘metaphysical’ residue. At the same time, Gramsci does not conceive of human subjects as being wholly constructed by their environment, since he would point out that these subjects are in fact an active and ongoing part of modifying that environment. Thus, according to Gramsci, ‘each one of us changes himself, modifies himself to the extent that he changes and modifies the complex relations of which he is the hub.’⁸⁴ Gramsci always already situates these general reflections on humanity within the co-ordinates of a struggle between competing hegemonies, between dominant and subaltern. Gramsci’s writings are marked with a deep concern for the development of elements of autonomy and self-awareness among the subaltern groups. These groups are fundamentally passive, but their passivity is a social relation that is constituted through human activity. Their passivity is a product of the inclusion of subaltern groups as an

integral element of capitalist modernity.⁸⁵ At the same time, this social relation is a fundamental obstacle to their potential emergence from their subaltern condition.⁸⁶

Gramsci attempts to grapple with this problem by acknowledging what Liguori describes as ‘the largely *pre-intentional* materials’⁸⁷ through which he seeks to realize a ‘new subjectivity.’⁸⁸ Gramsci develops a concept of ‘common sense’ in order to account for a popular form of embodied ‘deep knowledge.’ Contrary to the English meaning of ‘common sense’ as a positive practical attitude, Gramsci’s use of the Italian term *senso comune* [‘common sense’] has a more neutral meaning.⁸⁹ As Kate Crehan explains, Gramsci’s ‘common sense’ is the ‘accumulation of taken-for-granted “knowledge” to be found in every human community,’⁹⁰ which ‘provides a heterogeneous bundle of assumed certainties that structure the basic landscapes within which individuals are socialized and chart their individual life courses.’⁹¹ Gramsci uses this concept in order to articulate the complex combination of intellectuals and masses in the process of subject formation. Despite its durability, common sense is something only relatively fixed and demonstrates a level of malleability that is empirically observable. According to Gramsci, in the formation of a collective will, it is both possible and necessary for intellectuals to guide a modification of ‘common sense’ through a process of ‘intellectual and moral reform.’⁹² This involves locating the elements of what Gramsci calls ‘good sense’ [*buon senso*] within ‘common sense’ and rendering these elements more coherent.⁹³ Here, Gramsci employs the concept of ‘coherence’ in an innovative sense, not only to mean an increase of logical consistency, but primarily of historico-political efficacy, the raising of a group’s capacity to act.⁹⁴ ‘Common sense’ therefore represents, for Gramsci, the point of departure on which any realistic conception of social transformation must be based. Gramsci’s conception of the political maintains a commitment to the active role of subjects and the formation of collective will, while conceiving that the subject is, as Liguori indicates, ‘*the outcome* of a complex and

intangible but nonetheless real combination'⁹⁵ of the different social elements to which it belongs 'often in a syncretic manner.'⁹⁶ Based on this conceptual framework of hegemony, ideology and common sense, I will now address the relationship between individuals and society in Gramsci's framework, from which he elaborates his innovative theory of persons and personality.

Politics, the Individual and 'Molecular' Transformation

Marx's 1859 *Preface* to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* is often treated as the most condensed statement of the theoretical framework of 'classical' Marxism.⁹⁷ In this text Marx employs a metaphor that conceives the relations of social production as an 'economic basis' on top of which 'arises a legal and political superstructure,'⁹⁸ a superstructure that corresponds with 'definite forms of social consciousness.'⁹⁹ This base-superstructure relationship has often been interpreted as a mechanical and metaphysical determination of 'social, political and intellectual life'¹⁰⁰ (the ideological forms of the superstructure) by the economy.¹⁰¹ While Gramsci's political thought exhibits a framework with formulations familiar to 'classical' Marxism, he articulates these elements in a highly original and sometimes surprising manner. Gramsci's 'dilated'¹⁰² account of social *superstructures* (plural) are certainly not epiphenomenal and crudely deterministic products of the economy. As Thomas explains, in Gramsci's expansive formulation, the superstructures are not only legal and political forms, but 'all of the forms in which classes know and comprehend the conditions of their struggle within a determinate social formation.'¹⁰³ They are the result of all of the relationships between individuals in society that intersect on the terrain of the political struggle for hegemony.

Michele Filippini investigates the distinctive conception of individuality that we find in the *Notebooks*. On his reading, Gramsci treats individuality not as a general abstraction of universal characteristics, but ‘as something concerning the structure of the individual, that is, the individual’s composition from a series of organic, but also conflicting, interconnected parts.’¹⁰⁴ The content of these various parts derives from the participation of the individual in various mass experiences, as a member of different social groups stratified from the local to the global level. For Gramsci, the individual is a complex composite of different types of ‘collective man,’¹⁰⁵ and therefore a center of interaction or a ‘hub;’¹⁰⁶ a site at which these elements form an often contradictory and unstable equilibrium. Gramsci identifies the need to reform the concept of ‘Man in general’¹⁰⁷ that derives from the Catholic conception of an individual as ‘well defined and limited.’¹⁰⁸ Basing himself on the sixth thesis of Marx’s *Theses on Feuerbach*, which states that ‘the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual,’¹⁰⁹ Gramsci regards human nature not as a fixed concept, but as ‘the ensemble of social relations.’¹¹⁰ Gramsci expands on Marx’s thesis by using an archaeological metaphor, comparing the individual to a ‘walking anachronism, a fossil,’¹¹¹ in which the historical process has left ‘stratified deposits.’¹¹² Furthermore, Gramsci notes that it is sometimes social groups ‘that express the most developed modernity,’¹¹³ that ‘lag behind in other respects,’¹¹⁴ rendering them ‘incapable of complete historical autonomy.’¹¹⁵ The experience of these groups in particular is one of different competing hegemonies and various elements that are anachronistic to modernity. Thus, for Gramsci, the ‘human’ is not the expression of an original and unitary essence, but a ‘point of arrival,’¹¹⁶ or as Liguori noted above, ‘the subject is *the outcome*’ of a process.¹¹⁷ As Peter Thomas argues:

Only at this point, as a result of a complex series of mediations, can we begin to talk of a “subject” or “human essence,” which nevertheless remains a type of heuristic shorthand for the processes it describes.¹¹⁸

Gramsci's understanding of the historical forms of 'individuality,' first in the struggle of the bourgeoisie with feudal society and later in the developing conflict between different forms of collectivism and individualism (the 'associational-individual' and the 'capitalist-individual')¹¹⁹ is part of a strategy for negating this notion of 'Man in general.' However, it is also a contribution to a process of constructing new forms of individuality. The conception of 'Man' envisaged by the philosophy of praxis, according to Gramsci, is a 'historical bloc of purely individual and subjective elements and of mass and objective or material elements with which the individual is in an active relationship.'¹²⁰ Redolent again of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, for Gramsci, it is necessary to transform the 'external world, the general system of relations,'¹²¹ in order to 'develop oneself.'¹²² Man is therefore 'a series of active relationships (a process) in which individuality, though perhaps the most important, is not, however, the only element to be taken in to account.'¹²³ This leads us to his conception of society, including its relationship to the individual.

We can infer Gramsci's conception of the individual, on the one hand, from his negative criticisms of the monadic conception of 'Man,' indifferent to social relations, which he detects in both Catholicism and the philosophy of Benedetto Croce. On the other hand, Filippini notes that there are two positive aspects to Gramsci's theory of the individual: first, a '*historicity* (or political quality) defining the contingency of each and every individual formation,'¹²⁴ and second, 'the *sociality* that sees social relations as a constituent element of an individual's being.'¹²⁵ According to Filippini, the combination of individuality ('the specific element of each individual') with sociality ('the relations that determine said individual') effectively constitutes an individual.¹²⁶ I will explore further below the personality that an individual acquires out of this conflict.

In the *Notebooks*, Gramsci places a great deal of emphasis on the centrality of the French cultural experience, including in its positivistic (Comte) and anti-positivistic

(Bergson) forms. In Gramsci's reflections on the 'social characteristics of individuality'¹²⁷ and its 'social determinants',¹²⁸ Filippini argues that the Sardinian both draws on and contributes to a tradition of sociological thought developed by Émile Durkheim.¹²⁹ Gramsci absorbs elements of this tradition, in a particular form fused with Marxism, through the mediation of the writings of the French syndicalist Georges Sorel. This confluence relates to a shared focus with Durkheim on the individual in 'modern industrial society.'¹³⁰ Here, the stability of the social order is dependent both on the 'dynamic relationship between the individual and social elements of individuality'¹³¹ and on the "social production of individuals",¹³² who are differentiated from one another but rendered uniform in the masses.¹³³ While Durkheim and Gramsci share a number of characteristic features in their processes of argumentation, there are fundamental and illuminating differences. According to Filippini, Durkheim's categories focus on the preservation of an ordered unity within society, whereas Gramsci emphasizes 'the political actions of part of society on society itself,'¹³⁴ which 'displaces the political within the sphere of partiality rather than that of universality.'¹³⁵ Filippini argues that Gramsci extends a path pioneered by Sorel before him, namely using the 'toolbox' of French sociology while replacing 'the "de-subjectivized" division of labor'¹³⁶ of Durkheim with 'a world view, an ethics and a new society'¹³⁷ founded on labor.¹³⁸ Gramsci's conception of the acquisition of personality develops from a study of conflict and struggle in society, moving beyond the dislocated standpoint of a social scientific observer, whilst remaining cognizant of the challenges formulated by that discipline.

The concept of 'person' [*la persona*] is not limited to the individual in Gramsci's thought, but may refer to either an individual or a collective person.¹³⁹ While Gramsci discusses individuality in relation to 'objective' social relations, his treatment of personality relates to an awareness of these relations, and the development of an historical autonomy through their modification and transformation. Thus, Gramsci states that 'to create one's

personality means to acquire consciousness of them [the social relations] and to modify one's own personality means to modify the *ensemble* of these relations.¹⁴⁰ For Gramsci, consciousness can have a gradation, or 'degree of profundity,'¹⁴¹ related to the extent to which it knows how to modify these relations, and achieving this consciousness to a certain extent already modifies them.¹⁴² Furthermore, it is not enough to know the *ensemble* of social relations in a synchronic manner; they must also be 'known genetically, in the movement of their formation.'¹⁴³ Thus, Gramsci argues that 'each individual is the synthesis not only of existing relations, but of the history of these relations. He is a *précis* of the past.'¹⁴⁴ Also in his pre-prison writings, Gramsci is deeply concerned with the personification of political leadership as the culmination of a historical process of development of a group, a selection process or a summary. Thus, Gramsci and Palmiro Togliatti, writing in the 'Lyon Theses' in 1926, argue that the political autonomy of a group requires that it achieves 'a physiognomy, a personality and a precise consciousness.'¹⁴⁵ In this tri-partite structure, it would be a mistake to place personality exclusively on the subjective side of this formulation, solely in terms of consciousness. On the contrary, personality appears to play a mediating role between the development of a critical consciousness and the physical embodiment of a collective will in a living organism. This mediating role of personality lies at the intersection of the determining function of social relations and the emergence of an awareness of them. Gramsci's theory of personality is therefore an element of his wider conception of knowledge, and his attempts to re-formulate its role in both realistic and 'democratic' terms. For example, the mediating role of personality seems to correspond to Gramsci's formulation of a 'passage from knowing to understanding to feeling'¹⁴⁶ in the fusion of individual and mass elements. Thus, Gramsci argues that if the relation of leadership between intellectuals and 'people-nation' is one of 'organic cohesion in which feeling-passion becomes understanding and thence knowledge (not mechanically but in a way that is alive), then and only then is the relationship one of

representation.¹⁴⁷ The effective realization of a social force requires a ‘shared life’ in which the popular feelings of the mass and the intellectual element are united without resorting to a mechanical and coercive imposition of their relationship. Gramsci termed this reciprocal interaction between popular initiative and its intellectual organizers a ‘historical bloc,’¹⁴⁸ the achievement of a unity between the structure and ensemble of superstructures.¹⁴⁹ The emergence of such a ‘historical bloc’ is dependent on the overcoming of a state of ‘incoherence’¹⁵⁰ among those groups seeking to engage in a struggle over hegemony.¹⁵¹ For Thomas, Gramsci’s studies of the ‘social and historical determination of the person [*la persona*],’¹⁵² represent a kind of ‘anti-Platonist Platonic allegory’¹⁵³ in which Gramsci returns to a limited cell-form in order to comprehend a wider perspective, in turn modifying the point of origin.¹⁵⁴ His insights into the person ‘are “translated” into the register of the historical efficacy of philosophy—and then in turn “re-translated” back into terms of its instantiation in the individual as the elementary “cell” of hegemonic struggle.’¹⁵⁵

We can now discuss the importance of ‘molecular’ transformations for Gramsci’s conception of social transformation and the agency of those engaged in this process. According to Filippini, in the *Prison Notebooks*, there is an ‘isomorphism’ between Gramsci’s theory of personality and his theory of society. They are two expressions of a single problem.¹⁵⁶ Thus, Gramsci does not counter-pose his account of personality formation and the micro-dynamics of social transformation with the macro-processes of the formation of the State and its apparatuses. Gramsci relates the practical functioning of individuals, who act as individuals despite the incoherence of their individuality, to the particular order that arises in modern industrial society. His reflections on personality both enrich and are enriched by his theory of society. A key element in the emergence of a new personality is Gramsci’s conception of ‘molecular transformations,’¹⁵⁷ which are defined by Filippini as ‘the slow, yet inexorable mutation of single elements within an organism (be it individual or

collective) that at a certain point metamorphose from quantitative to qualitative, and which redefine the nature and structure of the object in question.’¹⁵⁸ Gramsci makes use of the conception of ‘molecular changes’¹⁵⁹ to account for different historical phenomena. For example, he examines the political process of ‘transformism’ [*trasformismo*] during the Italian *Risorgimento*, in which conservative Moderate forces incorporated individuals from the radical Action party within a new order.¹⁶⁰ Gramsci also studies the new production techniques of Fordism, which involved the conscious creation of a new type of worker by industrialists.¹⁶¹ In both of these examples, Gramsci deploys ‘the interpretative criterion of molecular changes’¹⁶² which ‘progressively modify the pre-existing composition of forces, and hence become the matrix of new changes.’¹⁶³

Gramsci also applies the concept of ‘molecular transformation’ to the process of adaptation and moral crisis, or the ‘catastrophe of character,’¹⁶⁴ within an individual. In this form, ‘molecular transformation’ is a dangerous process in which the protagonist experiences a split personality. One part may be aware of the effects, but they serve cumulatively to undermine the entire will to resist this transformation. While Gramsci acknowledges that the phenomenon of ‘molecular transformation’ has existed in the past, he suggests that it is of key importance in modern society.¹⁶⁵ In particular, we can distinguish the present form of ‘molecular transformation’ as one that is consciously ‘calculated’¹⁶⁶ and ‘prepared systematically.’¹⁶⁷ The disaggregating effect of this ‘molecular’ process of transformation on the subaltern groups, Thomas notes, runs counter to Gramsci’s project that seeks to establish a more ‘coherent’ conception of the world.¹⁶⁸ In order to address this struggle in more detail, we will explore Gramsci’s analysis of collective organisms.

Collective Subjectivity and Collective Will

Gramsci's reflections on the interaction between individual and collective forms of transformation develop an important line of enquiry into the nature of subjectivity in modern society. These concepts fit within his overall framework of a struggle between hegemonies, which plays out on the terrain of ideology. In Liguori's formulation, ideology is 'the site of the constitution of collective subjectivity, but also—in a more contradictory manner—of individual subjectivity, within the ambit of the struggle for hegemony.'¹⁶⁹ In Gramscian terms, the nature of the agency that realizes social change is explored through the formation of collective will. Gramsci concentrates not only on the limitations that constrain an individual's agency in society, but also on the means by which those limitations can be overcome through collective endeavor. Thus, he argues that 'when the individual can associate himself with all the other individuals who want the same changes, and if the changes wanted are rational, the individual can be multiplied an impressive number of times.'¹⁷⁰ This is not to say that Gramsci envisages collective organisms to be absolutely free; rather, they operate within a restricted field of forces. As Liguori states, an organism is capable of making choices according to 'the (limited) possibility of the real choices in front of it.'¹⁷¹ In this sense, Liguori points out that the inspirations of Gramsci's youth (Bergson, Gentile) are tempered in his *Prison Notebooks* by a reflection on the inertia and passivity embodied in the different forms of 'common sense' [*senso comune*] present in society.¹⁷² For Gramsci, the importance of 'supra-individual organisms' hitherto has been appreciated only in a 'mechanistic and determinist manner,'¹⁷³ indicating the legitimate source of some hostile reactions against them. By contrast, Gramsci envisages a conception in which 'relations are seen as active and in movement'¹⁷⁴ between 'the *societas hominum* and the *societas rerum*,'¹⁷⁵ or between 'the society of "men" and the society of things: i.e. the human and natural worlds.'¹⁷⁶

Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis' emphasizes the centrality of the 'collective will,' characteristic of a life-long rejection of what he described in his early writings as the contamination of Marxism by 'positivist and naturalist encrustations.'¹⁷⁷ Yet, in his later writings, Gramsci's treatment of the collective will is increasingly concrete in its analysis of collective organisms within a field of forces. In Carlos Nelson Coutinho's estimation, the 'collective will' continues to play 'an important role in the construction of the social order, but no longer as formative of reality, rather as a decisive moment articulated with the determinations that derive from objective reality, in particular the social relations of production.'¹⁷⁸ Gramsci criticizes the 'abstract character'¹⁷⁹ of Sorel's concept of the 'political myth,'¹⁸⁰ identifying not only the negative and destructive aspect of myth, but also its positive constructive potential. Thus, Gramsci demonstrates his appreciation for the historical achievements of the Jacobin forces in the French revolution, which were able to create a 'national-popular'¹⁸¹ collective will (i.e., a new form of hegemony). This remains a project, albeit in a new post-Jacobin form,¹⁸² that Gramsci envisages for a 'modern Prince,'¹⁸³ a political party adequate to the tasks organizing an 'intellectual and moral reform'¹⁸⁴ of modern society. Gramsci re-defines the collective will as 'operative awareness of historical necessity, as protagonist of a real and effective historical drama.'¹⁸⁵ On the one hand, the 'collective will' must comprehend the stubborn historical and economic conditions on which arbitrary ventures can founder. The collective will is a 'rational, not an arbitrary, will, which is realized in so far as it corresponds to objective historical necessities.'¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, it must 'make history'¹⁸⁷ by awakening passions that can be only be given coherent expression by organizing a new form of culture. It must become, in Gramsci's terms, 'a culture, a form of "good sense," a conception of the world with an ethic that conforms to its structure.'¹⁸⁸

Fabio Frosini points out that for Gramsci there is a tendency in industrial society, born in the material organization of production and education, to render the norms of conduct and forms of life of the masses increasingly homogeneous, and orientated towards the production of standardized individuals.¹⁸⁹ Gramsci explains that ‘we are all conformists of some conformism or other, always man-in-the-mass or collective man.’¹⁹⁰ The struggle for hegemony is thus a struggle between different types of ‘conformism,’ representing a crisis of civil society. It would be arbitrary and unhistorical to propose a rejection of the process of ‘conformism’ outright, which is, in any case, an impossibility in modern society. Gramsci rather advocates an intervention to organize a new form of ‘conformism’ from below, which would ‘allow new possibilities for self-discipline, in other words for freedom, including that of the individual.’¹⁹¹ A critical yet appreciative attitude towards the notion of ‘conformism’ is therefore central to Gramsci’s conception of ‘intellectual and moral reform.’¹⁹² In order to render both the individual and social group more coherent, it is necessary to develop an approach that takes ‘common sense’ as its foundation. Gramsci proposes to raise this disjointed and incoherent form, which arises from the subaltern groups’ experience of a dislocated and non-coherent present, made up of bizarrely composite elements of different conceptions of the world, to a coherent unity. Thomas locates its origins in the modern historical experience, where ‘the present is necessarily non-identical with itself, composed of numerous “times” that do not coincide but encounter each other with mutual incomprehension.’¹⁹³ For Thomas, Gramsci’s philosophy of praxis gives ‘the practically-focused [‘common sense’] *senso comune* a level of critical self-awareness regarding its historical determination that allows it to break with the incoherence and passivity imposed upon it by an incoherent present.’¹⁹⁴ Gramsci proposes the figure of the ‘democratic philosopher’¹⁹⁵ as the embodiment of this concrete new political perspective, a self-critical intellectual for whom an active relationship exists between her and the ‘cultural

environment'¹⁹⁶ that she is attempting to modify. However, this practical transformation of philosophy, 'forced to recognize its own foundation,'¹⁹⁷ risks what Gramsci describes as the mummification of 'common sense,' the transformation of a 'justified reaction into a permanent attitude.'¹⁹⁸

The challenge confronting this project, of re-constructing 'collective man' through an approach of 'conformism from below,' results from the dual nature of collective organisms found in Gramsci's *Notebooks*. They are, as Filippini explains, both 'organic mechanisms rebalancing the power system,'¹⁹⁹ and at the same time 'an independent expression of subaltern, potentially revolutionary demands.'²⁰⁰ Thomas alerts us to the way in which, for Gramsci, institutionalized practices of philosophy, even in their radical forms, can be integrated into the apparatus of the hegemonic project of the current ruling group as a relation of 'speculative command.'²⁰¹ The starting point of Gramsci's alternative critical project is what he describes as an 'inventory'²⁰² of the 'infinity of traces'²⁰³ deposited in us by the historical process, and from which a more coherent conception of the world can be consciously formed.²⁰⁴ Gramsci's discussion of personality emerges at an early stage in the *Prison Notebooks* through his reflections on Sorel's concept of the 'spirit of cleavage,'²⁰⁵ and his interest in the subaltern groups' development of an 'awareness of their own historical personality.'²⁰⁶ The difficulty of comprehending Gramsci's conception of the subaltern groups is that they are defined by their passivity, and thus in a sense 'excluded,' yet are simultaneously actively constituted as passive, and thus included within the dominant hegemonic project. In other words, Thomas argues that the concept of passivity is 'a social relation we must actively construct, in relation to other equally active social relations.'²⁰⁷ Here, I would argue that Gramsci's conception of 'mummification' mentioned above could play an important role in explaining the passive constitution of the subaltern groups.²⁰⁸ As Thomas noted above, the

experience of the subaltern classes, confined to the terrain of a “civil society” subjugated by the existing “political society” of the dominant class, is one of a continual molecular transformation, of disaggregations that decrease the capacity to act of both the individual and the class to which they belong.²⁰⁹

For the subaltern groups to emerge from their condition of passivity requires the rendering coherent of fragmented elements of ‘spontaneous’ leadership that arise and the organization of this into a systematic and ‘conscious leadership.’²¹⁰ Gramsci argues that the task of the theoretician is to ‘translate’ the healthy elements of historical life into theoretical language, rather than seeking to impose an ‘abstract scheme’ on reality.²¹¹ This process, aiming towards a hitherto unrealized unity of theory and practice, is, for Gramsci, a distinctive feature of Marx’s contribution that, by moving into the realm of practice, transforms both the form and content of philosophy itself.

Conclusion

Gramsci offers a powerful theoretical toolbox for re-articulating the problem of subjectivity. While Gramsci’s conception of the subject has often, following Althusser, been characterized as a form of ‘theoretical humanism,’ in this chapter, we have seen how Gramsci’s theory of subjectivity is one that withdraws from the conventional language of ‘subjects,’ and deploys an innovative theory of persons and personality on the terrain of a political struggle between rival hegemonies. The continuing relevance of Gramsci’s thought is demonstrated by his enduring power to provoke stimulating encounters with recent thinkers of the capillary networks of social life, such as the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. As Kate Crehan has demonstrated,²¹² Gramsci’s treatment of the problem of ‘deep knowledge’ with his conception of ‘common sense,’ explored above, has productive resonances with the notion of

‘habitus’ developed in Bourdieu’s theory of subjectivity.²¹³ Furthermore, a comparative study of their thought illuminates unexpected aspects of both thinkers’ frameworks.²¹⁴

Gramsci’s philosophy acknowledges the conflictual basis of social life in realistic terms, acknowledging the ‘pre-intentional’ aspect of the ‘common sense’ of popular social groups. At the same time, it seeks to propose concrete reforms in order re-shape and elaborate on the intuitions of a ‘future philosophy...appropriate for a globally united human species.’²¹⁵ This involves confronting the passive condition characteristic of the subaltern groups and their experience of a radically incoherent and dislocated present. Yet, Gramsci also outlines the possibility of moving from the time in which the subaltern is considered as a ‘thing’ to that in which it has a feeling of itself as ‘a historical person, a protagonist.’²¹⁶ While Gramsci does not propose a ready-made blueprint for social transformation, the laboratory of his thought continues to provide a conceptually productive research platform for analyzing the relationship between subjectivity and the political in our current conjuncture.

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² Cited in Joseph Buttigieg, ‘Preface,’ in Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.1, edited by Joseph Buttigieg (Columbia University Press: New York, 2011), p.xix.

³ A growing number of these works are now available in translation. See, for example, Giuseppe Cospito, *The Rhythm of Thought in Gramsci* (Brill: Leiden, 2016), or Guido Liguori, *Gramsci’s Pathways* (Brill: Leiden, 2015).

⁴ I reference the Italian Gerratana critical edition of Gramsci’s Prison Notebooks (Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, edited by Valentino Gerratana (Einaudi: Torino, 1975)), followed by the standard reference system giving the notebook number (Q), note number (§), and page number. I also provide a reference to the currently incomplete English critical edition (Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 3 volumes, edited and trans. Joseph Buttigieg (Columbia University Press: New York, 2011)), or to a relevant anthology of his writings in English where these translations are available.

⁵ A survey of some of these ‘images of Gramsci’ is available in Peter Thomas, ‘Hegemony, Passive Revolution and the Modern Prince,’ *Thesis Eleven*, vol.117, n.1, 2013, p.24.

⁶ Peter Thomas, *The Gramscian Moment: Philosophy, Hegemony and Marxism* (Haymarket: Chicago, 2009), p.xxiv.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁸ See, for example, Michele Filippini, *Using Gramsci: A New Approach* (Pluto: London, 2017).

⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1971), p.324.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Q11, §13, p.1400; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.424.

¹¹ This is not to overlook Gramsci’s insightful analysis of the transformations of individual subjectivity, e.g. the effect of prison life on the mentality of the prisoner. For example, see Thomas’s discussion of the dislocation of a prisoner’s social identity that generates a tragic ‘non-presence of the present,’ in Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.399.

¹² Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.39.

¹³ Giuseppe Cacciatore, ‘soggettivo, soggettivismo, soggettività,’ in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-37*, edited by Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Carocci: Roma, 2009), pp.778-780.

¹⁴ In this chapter, limitations of space mean that it is not possible to cover the diverse manifestations in the *Prison Notebooks* of the question of subjectivity, and by extension of objectivity, e.g., the question of Gramsci’s attitude towards the objectivity of the ‘external world.’ I will draw upon wider issues only to the extent that they illuminate the central focus of the relationship between subjectivity and the political.

¹⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q8, §177, p.1049; my translation.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Q15, §25, p.1781; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.113.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Q15, §25, p.1781; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.113.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, Q15, §25, p.1781; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.113.

¹⁹ Liguori, *Gramsci’s Pathways*, p.24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.89.

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- ²² A discussion of Gramsci's theory of subjectivity must therefore encompass the problem of intellectuals, who help to elaborate and organize the collective historical awareness of particular social groups. The creation of intellectual strata was a key element in the emergence of subjects for Gramsci, playing a vital role in raising the masses from a passive condition and enabling their more or less coherent beliefs to becoming an effective material force.
- ²³ Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading 'Capital'* (Verso: New York, 2009), pp.140-153.
- ²⁴ Valentino Gerratana, *Problemi di metodo* (Editori Riuniti: Roma, 1997), p.137.
- ²⁵ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.397.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.397.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p.397.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.397.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.397-8.
- ³⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q7, §35, p.884; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.355.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, Q7, §35, p.884; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.355.
- ³² Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.398.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, p.450.
- ³⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol. 5 (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 2010), pp.3-5.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.29, pp.261-5.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, vol.5, p.4.
- ³⁷ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.398.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.378.
- ³⁹ Marx and Engels, *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol.5, p.5.
- ⁴⁰ Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State* (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1980), p.346.
- ⁴¹ Gramsci elaborates on issues raised by Labriola, modifying them in the light of his own experiences. Gramsci articulates his understanding of the unity of theory and practice in more concrete and realist terms by confronting questions of political organization that Labriola had not addressed. (For a wider discussion of their relationship, see Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, pp.142-155).
- ⁴² These complex issues involve the relationship of the philosophy of intellectuals to the 'spontaneous philosophy' of the mass of the population. Gramsci reconsiders in democratic terms the relationship between knowledge and culture (conceived in a broad sense as a way of life). For a further discussion, see Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11 §12, p.1375; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.323.
- ⁴³ Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, p.346.
- ⁴⁴ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.97.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.97. There are dissenting voices to this approach, such as Thomas Nemeth, who reads Gramsci from a phenomenological perspective within the tradition of epistemology. See Thomas Nemeth, *Gramsci's Philosophy: A Critical Study* (Harvester: Brighton, 1980).
- ⁴⁶ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q8, §169, p.1042; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.330.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Q8, §169, p.1042; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.330.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, Q8, §169, p.1042; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.330.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Q8, §169, p.1042; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.330.
- ⁵⁰ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.97.
- ⁵¹ Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State*, p.349.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, p.349.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.349.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.349.
- ⁵⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §12, p.1250; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp.365-6.
- ⁵⁶ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.450.
- ⁵⁷ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §27, p.1437; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.465.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, Q11, §27, p.1437; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.465.
- ⁵⁹ See, for example, Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (Verso: New York, 1993).
- ⁶⁰ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.11.
- ⁶¹ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.9.
- ⁶² Gramsci criticized a tendency within the Second International to ascribe to Marx's *Capital* a mechanical conception of economic laws that determined the evolution of society in a fatalistic manner. See Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.393.
- ⁶³ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q13, §17, p.1583; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.181.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Q13, §17, p.1583; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.181.

- ⁶⁵ Ibid., Q13, §17, p.1584; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp.181-182.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., Q13, §17, p.1583; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.181.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., Q17, §51, p.1947; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.267.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., Q13, §7, p.1567; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.243.
- ⁶⁹ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.84.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., p.84.
- ⁷¹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1380; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.328.
- ⁷² Marx and Engels, *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol.5, p.36.
- ⁷³ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.75.
- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p.75.
- ⁷⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §24, p.1263; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp.343-4.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., Q7, §19, p.868; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.376.
- ⁷⁷ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.75.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p.75.
- ⁷⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.I, §8, p.1225; Antonio Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and trans. by Derek Boothman (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1995), p.347.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., Q17, §51, p.1947; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.267.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., Q17, §51, p.1947; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.267.
- ⁸² Ibid., Q17, §51, p.1947; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.267.
- ⁸³ Ibid., Q7, §21, p.869; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.377.
- ⁸⁴ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1345; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.352.
- ⁸⁵ See Thomas, 'Hegemony, passive revolution and the modern Prince.'
- ⁸⁶ In an interesting observation, Jan Rehmann suggests that 'Gramsci replaced the Marxian language of "alienation" with one of "subalternity."' (Jan Rehmann, *Theories of Ideology* (Brill: Leiden, 2013), p.145).
- ⁸⁷ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.112.
- ⁸⁸ Ibid., p.112.
- ⁸⁹ See Thomas for a further discussion of the term *senso comune* (Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.16 fn61).
- ⁹⁰ Kate Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense: Inequality and its Narratives* (Duke University Press: Durham, 2016), p.43.
- ⁹¹ Ibid., p.43.
- ⁹² Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q16, §9, p.1860; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.395.
- ⁹³ Ibid., Q11, §59, p.1486; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.346.
- ⁹⁴ See Thomas for an account of the development of this term within the *Prison Notebooks* and its emergence as an organising thread of Gramsci's research, Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, pp.364-366.
- ⁹⁵ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.84.
- ⁹⁶ Ibid., p.84.
- ⁹⁷ Marx and Engels, *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol.29, pp.261-5.
- ⁹⁸ Ibid., p.263.
- ⁹⁹ Ibid., p.263.
- ¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p.263.
- ¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.263. Limitations of space preclude an assessment of the validity of this interpretation, which Gramsci associated with the Marxism of the Second International. See Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1388; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.337.
- ¹⁰² Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.67.
- ¹⁰³ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.99.
- ¹⁰⁴ Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.24.
- ¹⁰⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1345; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.352.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid., Q7, §35, p.884; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.355.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1345; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.352.
- ¹⁰⁹ Marx and Engels, *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol.5, p.4.
- ¹¹⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q7, §35, p.885; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.186.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., Q11, §12, p.1377; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ¹¹² Ibid., Q11, §12, p.1377; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ¹¹³ Ibid., Q11, §12, p.1377; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp.324-5.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid., Q11, §12, p.1377; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.325.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid. Q11, §12, p.1377; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.325.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid., Q7, §35, p.884; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.185.

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- ¹¹⁷ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.84.
- ¹¹⁸ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.395.
- ¹¹⁹ See Fabio Frosini, 'individuo,' in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-37*, edited by Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Carocci: Roma, 2009), p.420.
- ¹²⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §48, p.1338; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.360.
- ¹²¹ Ibid., Q10.II, §48, p.1338; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.360.
- ¹²² Ibid., Q10.II, §48, p.1338; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.360.
- ¹²³ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1345; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.352.
- ¹²⁴ Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.26.
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., p.26.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid., p.27.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid., p.28.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid., p.28.
- ¹²⁹ Ibid., p.28.
- ¹³⁰ Ibid., p.30.
- ¹³¹ Ibid., p.30.
- ¹³² Ibid., p.30.
- ¹³³ Ibid., p.30.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid., p.31.
- ¹³⁵ Ibid., p.31.
- ¹³⁶ Ibid., p.37.
- ¹³⁷ Ibid., p.37.
- ¹³⁸ Ibid., p.37.
- ¹³⁹ Rocco Lacorte, 'persona,' in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-37*, edited by Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Carocci: Roma, 2009), p.634.
- ¹⁴⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §54, p.1345; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.352.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁴² Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁴³ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid., Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁴⁵ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Pre-Prison Writings: 1921-1926*, edited and trans. Quintin Hoare (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1978), p.362.
- ¹⁴⁶ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §67, p.1505; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.418.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Q11, §67, p.1505; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.418.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid., Q8, §182, p.1082; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.366.
- ¹⁴⁹ Ibid., Q8, §182, p.1082; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.366.
- ¹⁵⁰ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.373.
- ¹⁵¹ As mentioned above, Gramsci's use of the term 'incoherence' relates to a lack of historical efficacy.
- ¹⁵² Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.374.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., p.374.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.374.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p.375.
- ¹⁵⁶ Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.37.
- ¹⁵⁷ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q17, §51, p.1947; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.267.
- ¹⁵⁸ Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.40.
- ¹⁵⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q15, §11, p.1767; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.109.
- ¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Q15, §11, p.1767; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.109.
- ¹⁶¹ Ibid., Q22, §3, p.2148; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.295.
- ¹⁶² Ibid., Q15, §11, p.1767; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.109.
- ¹⁶³ Ibid., Q15, §11, p.1767; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.109.
- ¹⁶⁴ Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.40.
- ¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, this concept has personal significance for Gramsci, as a prisoner resisting a certain individual form of molecular transformation. See Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.399.
- ¹⁶⁶ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q15, §9, p.1764.
- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid., Q15, §9, p.1764.
- ¹⁶⁸ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.373.
- ¹⁶⁹ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.84.

- ¹⁷⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353. Gramsci's conception of the 'rational' is developed with a specific meaning relating to the notion of historical effectivity.
- ¹⁷¹ Liguori, *Gramsci's Pathways*, p.116.
- ¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p.116.
- ¹⁷³ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Q10.II, §54, p.1346; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353.
- ¹⁷⁶ Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.353 fn39.
- ¹⁷⁷ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Political Writings: 1910-1920* (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1977), p.34.
- ¹⁷⁸ Carlos Nelson Coutinho, 'volontà collettiva,' in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-37*, edited by Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Carocci: Roma, 2009), p.900; my translation.
- ¹⁷⁹ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q13, §1, p.1559; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.130.
- ¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, Q13, §1, p.1559; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.130.
- ¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Q13, §1, p.1559; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.130.
- ¹⁸² See, Fabio Frosini, 'L'egemonia e i "subalterni": utopia, religione, democrazia,' *International Gramsci Journal*, vol.2, n.1, 2016, p.127, and, Fabio Frosini, *La religione dell'uomo moderno: politica e verità nei «Quaderni del carcere» di Antonio Gramsci* (Carocci: Roma, 2010).
- ¹⁸³ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q13, §1, p.1559; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.130.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Q13, §1, p.1560; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.132.
- ¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, Q13, §1, p.1559; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.130.
- ¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Q11, §59, p.1485; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.346.
- ¹⁸⁷ Marx and Engels, *Marx Engels Collected Works*, vol.11, p.103.
- ¹⁸⁸ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §59, p.1485; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.346.
- ¹⁸⁹ Fabio Frosini, 'individuo' in *Dizionario gramsciano: 1926-37*, edited by Guido Liguori and Pasquale Voza (Carocci: Roma, 2009), p.420.
- ¹⁹⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, Q7, §12, p.862; Gramsci, *Further Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.276.
- ¹⁹² *Ibid.*, Q16, §9, p.1860; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.395.
- ¹⁹³ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.283.
- ¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.374.
- ¹⁹⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q10.II, §44, p.1332; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.350.
- ¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, Q10.II, §44, p.1332; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.350.
- ¹⁹⁷ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.374.
- ¹⁹⁸ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q8, §28, p.958; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.3, p.254.
- ¹⁹⁹ Filippini, *Using Gramsci*, p.47.
- ²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.47.
- ²⁰¹ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.450.
- ²⁰² Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ²⁰³ *Ibid.*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.
- ²⁰⁵ The 'primitive and elementary' phase of differentiation from the dominant order, taken up and examined by Gramsci as a part of the development of the autonomy of a social group.
- ²⁰⁶ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q3, §49, p.333; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.2, p.53.
- ²⁰⁷ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.305.
- ²⁰⁸ For Gramsci, the 'mummification of culture' helps us to understand the enduring power of certain anachronistic forms, the apparently 'living' role played by 'dead' traditions. This process can be imposed from above by strategies of dispersion wrought by the dominant groups, but also continues to be reproduced by groups that stand to benefit from the negation of their influence. Gramsci's concept of mummification helps to explain the obstacles facing the emergence of the subaltern groups from their condition of passivity. For a full examination of the concept of mummification in Gramsci's *Notebooks*, see Robert Jackson, 'Subalternity and the Mummification of Culture in Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks*,' *International Gramsci Journal*, vol.2, n.1, 2016, pp.201-225.
- ²⁰⁹ Thomas, *Gramscian Moment*, p.373.
- ²¹⁰ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q3, §48, p.328; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.2, p.49.
- ²¹¹ *Ibid.*, Q3, §48, p.332; Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, vol.2, p.52.
- ²¹² Kate Crehan, 'Gramsci's concept of Common Sense: a useful concept for anthropologists?' *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, vol.16, n.2, 2011, pp.273-287.

²¹³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1977).

²¹⁴ For a more sustained analysis, see Robert Jackson, 'On Bourdieu and Gramsci,' in *Gramsciana: Rivista Internazionale di Studi su Antonio Gramsci*, vol.2, 2017, pp.139-174.

²¹⁵ Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Q11, §12, p.1376; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.324.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Q11, §12, p.1388; Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, p.337.